



Tapu!tea

...ina ia manino le folauga.

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OFFICIAL AMERICAN SAMOA GOVERNMENT WEEKLY NEWSLETTER

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Governor Togiola begins outpatients visits, “feels much better”

(HONOLULU) – Governor Togiola Tulafono has begun outpatient visitation to doctors at Straub Hospital as follow-up to the kidney stone removal procedure that was performed last Saturday, January 8, 2007.

The following is the official statement from Governor Togiola:

“I wish to thank all of American Samoa for their best wishes and prayers – to all of you that have sent email and faxes to the American Samoa Hawaii office, as well as to those of you who have tried to call the hospital and could not get through last Saturday.

I feel much better and, God willing, I am looking forward to returning home this coming Sunday. My last scheduled check with the doctors is this coming Friday afternoon.

As for the kidney stone, I have been informed that the operation removed the whole stone – all of it. The kidney is functioning normally now.

As for the suspicious finding in my left lung, as identified in the CAT Scan at LBJ Medical Center, the specialist at Straub ordered a full CAT scan of the lungs and determined that the shadows identified in the on island scan was not a tumor. It was just uncleared Bronchitis from the last cold I had in November. I am being treated with antibiotics to clear it up.

Thank you again. Soifua.”

LT. GOVERNOR IPULASI AITOFELE SUNIA PRESENTS THE STATE OF THE TERRITORY ADDRESS BEFORE THE 30TH LEGISLATURE’S FIRST REGULAR SESSION 2007

Foreword

I rise on behalf of the Governor of American Samoa, who cannot be with us today and present this State of the Territory address before the First Regular Session of the 30th Legislature, and to the Territory of American Samoa.

Before I begin, the Governor sends his regrets and his best wishes. He is currently undergoing necessary medical treatment. Our prayers and well wishes are with him and Mary at this time.

American Samoa has been on the verge of breaking through several barriers for the past few years. Barriers of accountability. Barriers of economic development and diversification. Barriers of good governance. In the past, gaps were bridged in order to provide our people with better goods and services, and an overall better way of life.



The purpose of this administration during this next year will be to move forward, transcending the barriers which keep us from accomplishing total accountability, economic development and diversification and most of all, good governance. It is my firm belief that this is our time to move forward.

State of the Economy

It is my extreme pleasure to report that the preliminary and unaudited results of ASG's fund balance from the Treasury shows that we finished out Fiscal Year 2006 in the black. The state of our Territory's finances is strong.

The Territory continues to move a positive fund balance into the future. Although there were some Executive agencies that were overspent, the great majority of the debt was covered by savings from several agencies due to tight fiscal controls imposed at year's end. On the whole, the Territory is moving forward with its fiscal policies to ensure the effective and efficient delivery of services to our people.

American Samoa's finance management system is still 'the model' for other territories to emulate. CIP funding for this year is up \$1 million dollars because of ASG's commitment to sound finance management. ASG's finances and our financial management position is constantly improving. It is our commitment to keep this trend going – to move this Territory and our people forward.

Our local farmers have done their share to grow our economy by supplying locally raised produce to the tune of \$886,000. ASG helped our farmers this year by providing blight-proof taro species, fertilizer, seeds and pesticides – all at subsidized rates. Our own school lunch program purchased a good majority of local produce grown within the last year. This fresh produce was consumed by our children, who were able to take advantage of higher nutritional value of fresh fruits and vegetables, as opposed to the use of canned foods for our children's nutritional needs.

There are other things to talk about today of great importance to the people of American Samoa. As we look to the future, and as families grow and the Territory grows, we cannot forget to talk about the many families, together, wanting to build that new house or renovate their existing homes. A new house or even a remodeled house has always been a dream for every family. Over the past year, American Samoa saw the most ever home loan approvals under the Governor's HOME loan program administered in partnership with the Development Bank and funded by HUD. More than \$1 million was pumped into the economy in the form of new and rehabilitated homes in American Samoa. Over the next five years, we are aiming at bringing in another \$1 million in the form of new homes under the newly established Affordable Housing Program for the Most Needy. These new homes for families in the Territory will be subsidized heavily through federal CDBG dollars, thus moving forward the dream of home ownership for many of our families in the Territory.

As we promised the Territory two years ago, we will deliver on time. In 2006, American Samoa completed its financial and single audits for 2005 on time. This is the first time that ASG has filed on time in over ten years. It took a lot of hard work and a lot of back and forth with federal counterparts, but we did it. The hard work does not stop there, however; we are now on track and we will work even harder to make sure that we stay on track. It is the aim of this administration to keep this momentum moving forward from here.

While we are presently doing well, we need to remain steadfast with our economy. Forecasts indicate a leveling off of our financial growth in the future. Therefore, we will continue to focus efforts on collections, and initiatives to get new moneys flowing into our economy. In this vein, I am resubmitting in this legislature, the bond bill for critical infrastructure which we will need in the new year. Also part of the Governor's Legislative Agenda for this session is a bill to strengthen our customs regulations. We will maintain our focus on increasing projects within the Territory to revitalize and reenergize our economy to keep American Samoa's progress moving forward.

State of Education

The state of education in the Territory is strong and improving. The latest Stanford Achievement Test 10 (SAT 10) scores show that our children improved over last year in the subjects of Reading, Math and Science for all grade levels that were tested. As many of you know, federal standards are dictating how we evaluate our schools. It's good to have standards. They provide important feedback for our schools and parents. Compliance with the strictures of the federal No Child Left Behind legislation is no easy task. Yet, our local institutions are surely making their way.

Our own DOE is piloting their Standards Based Assessment, which will be administered in the latter part of this school year. This locally developed assessment will give us a more accurate picture of the progress of our children who grow up in almost complete isolation from their overseas peers in the fifty states.

Our Teacher Scholarship Program which was begun in 2005 is still going strong with twenty-five teachers enrolled in Undergraduate studies, and twenty-three enrolled at ASCC. Along with two additional teachers pursuing their studies off-island, these fifty teachers are majoring in English, Mathematics, Science and Special Education, with an eye toward bringing their skills back for the benefit of our children.

DOE programs, on their own, are responsible for at least approximately twenty-seven more teachers receiving advanced degrees in administration and specialized areas of education. The commitment to upgrade the skill pool of our teachers was made when we entered into office a little over two years ago. Since that time, our teachers have increased in skill level and credentials, with the support of programs specifically for educating them and bringing their abilities in line with their overseas counterparts in the US. However, in order to move forward, we need financing and the will to continue this trend. This administration remains committed to this lofty goal and will not be deterred in our efforts to make this a reality.

We already have many success stories in our high schools. Another example of what can happen when high-risk schools become "no-risk" schools by implementing proven programs that help our students achieve in many key areas. We thank our hardworking high schools and their visionary leadership and a tireless faculty and staff. They've shown us the way, and we need to follow their footsteps. Of our local high schools, Tafuna, Leone, and Fagaitua all received full six-year accreditation terms, which is a testament to excellent leadership. Manu'a High School received accreditation for one year, with Poly-Tech extended to 2007 because of ongoing projects. Samoana High School is preparing for their full visitation in March of this year. Although short of full accreditation terms, these schools are trying their best and still have the ultimate goal of full accreditation terms as their prize. We must continue to work harder to find the best practices, the best methods, and the best allocation of resources to help all of our schools continue to achieve and improve. It will provide the best hope for success for all of our children. We must give our students the support they need to meet and exceed our expectations.

Our own ASCC experienced a rise in enrollment with an increase in the number of graduates in 2006. The number of Baccalaureate degrees upon completion of ASCC is also steadily increasing. This highlights the success of ASCC in preparing our children for study abroad at undergraduate schools. In recognition of that success, ASG is imploring private business and citizens of the Territory to assist with scholarships to ASCC, in the hopes of pushing more of our children to begin their careers in higher education locally. Companies that wish to offer scholarships, ASG encourages them to offer them for attendance at ASCC. Our local college provides a great kick-start, leading to baccalaureate studies off island. The bottom line is that ASCC needs our help to improve performance, to help better our community and to properly prepare our students for pursuing their educations off island. I want to thank all of the parents, teachers, administrators and students for their cooperation in improving the performance of our schools across the Territory.

State of Security

Through hands-on exercises and regional participation in security programs, the Territory has been improving the state of security in American Samoa.

2006 saw the Tactical Inter Operability Communications Plan & Full Scale Exercise conducted in American Samoa. Emergency response is only as good as the communications which support it. By conducting this exercise, the Territory is able to assess how we communicate during emergencies and what agencies or private companies control those communications resources. This is the first step in ensuring that all of the people who respond to your needs during emergencies are all on the same page.

Our Attorney General's Office and DPS continue to take a pro-prosecution stance on smaller crimes such as alcohol and domestic abuse related public peace disturbances which has resulted in a tremendous rise in criminal actions and resultant fines and fees for such violations of local law. While the system still requires fine-tuning, such crimes are no longer treated as a 'slap on the wrist' offense. There are now actual legal consequences to these violations, as there should be.

This administration is working on a number of immigration initiatives regarding domestic helpers, permanent residents and resident aliens, which will help to alleviate the stresses created and placed upon the Territory's immigration authorities. These initiatives will be aimed at improving our current system to alleviate unnecessary burdens commonly associated with residing legally in the Territory.

The protection of our children is one of our most important tasks as a government. For children to be violently robbed of their innocence during their tender years is something which is unforgivable. Therefore, in this session, this administration is proposing legislation, which mandates a life sentence for any person who sexually abuses a child. The current punishments do not appear to be working, as this problem rears its ugly head in our Territory over and over. Let this be a warning to all pedophile predators in American Samoa: The abuse will no longer be tolerated.

The Territory hosted the Regional Summit for Violence against women in 2006, thus maintaining our commitment to stamp out violence against the mothers, sisters and daughters of our Territory. The Summit was a complete success, bolstering American Samoa's visibility in the nation and the region for its stance on violence against women.

Our Territorial Office of Homeland Security received a total increase of federal funding to the tune of twenty-three percent. This is significant in that the overall federal budget was decreased by twenty-nine percent. The sum of the difference between funding over the two years was due to the overall effectiveness of our proposed solutions for Homeland Security. This administration will continue to work hard to ensure the security of every man, woman and child in the Territory over the coming year, through dedication to results and a commitment to settling for nothing less than the best, which is exactly what we deserve.

State of Healthcare

As everyone has been anticipating, the Coverage for All in American Samoa Program that is run out of the Governor's Office is coming to a close in early 2007. As part of its final report to the Territory, the program will be recommending a combination of new health programs, healthcare and finance reform, as well as new forms of finance, which the Territory may engage to provide healthcare coverage for every person in the Territory. The CAAS program will be briefing the Governor's Office, the Fono during this session, and the public at large as to the initiatives that they will be proposing. It was the goal of this administration in adopting this program to see to it that everyone in the Territory has access to affordable, quality healthcare. This program will help us to move forward in making this goal a reality.

After much anticipation, ASG broke ground for the Ta'u dispensary in 2006. ASG is estimating that within seven months, the Ta'u dispensary will be up and running, comparable to any dispensary in our Territory, complete with EMS facilities and appropriate facilities for a fully operational morgue.

The services being offered at the American Samoa Medical Center Authority are improving and will continue to do so. The Board of Directors of the Authority is committed to providing the best quality services available for our residents, even when this involves difficult and unpopular decisions. I encourage all of our residents to support the efforts at LBJ and to get involved in moving their operations forward toward better quality medical care at our only full scale healthcare institution.

In relation to good health, this administration will propose in this Legislature, a bill to prohibit smoking on commercial buses within the Territory. I am happy to inform you that this bill was the result of a call placed to me several weeks ago on the Governor's weekly radio program. The woman who called relayed to me the physical pain and symptoms that she has to endure because of people who smoke on commercial buses. Therefore, this administration is submitting this bill in order to improve the health of the public who utilize commercial transport.

State of Infrastructure

- *Communications*

Competition in the telecommunications sector has resulted in the lowest rates for wireless communication and Internet that the Territory has ever seen. This is the result of a robust telecommunications market and the presence of private company Blue Sky Communications. Despite the often-heated exchanges between ASTCA and Blue Sky, together they work to prove that competitive markets result in increased services and decreased prices for consumers.

American Samoa officially entered the North American Numbering Plan in April of 2005, resulting in the lowest long distance rates that American Samoa has ever seen – please see your long distance phone bills. Full integration of long distance rates is set for April of this year. Never before has your family overseas been so easily accessible, and at discounted rates. It remains to be seen whether this closeness is a good thing – especially when calling your off-island relatives to tell them about fa'alavelave.

ASTCA, in its own right, continues to pay for its own operations and other obligations of the government even with reductions to their rates – a true privatization success story.

With the arrival of fiber optic cable within the near future, we can expect an even more robust telecommunications market with burgeoning services for personal and business communications demands in the Territory.

- *ASPA*

ASPA continues to provide quality, reliable and cost effective utility services for all of American Samoa. ASPA is dependent on a hundred-percent supply of diesel fuel. They had been struggling with fuel issues, but they are back to normal. Even with a moderate rise in electricity rates, ASPA rates remain competitive with other Pacific island governments that rely on full-time diesel fuel. For individual consumer rates, they will be rolled back in accordance with regulation.

In 2006, the structure at ASPA was reorganized with inclusion of all managers in planning, budgeting and monitoring of projects. ASPA continues to build out electric, water and wastewater capability services for the community. ASPA also continues to pursue ongoing research and pilot projects in the fields of alternative energy, fuel cost reduction, joint purchasing agreements for fuel, and a strategic approach in professional development and training.

- *Public Works*

Despite the prevalence of potholes on our roads, ASG was able to move on a number of projects in 2006, including the completion of the Malaeimi-Faleniu road project and the Nu'uuli-Matu'u road project. Also completed in 2006 was the Ta'u Substation and the complete renovation of the Governor's Mansion, which is slated for public viewings as an historical landmark in 2007.

Set for advertisement in the near future is the Fagatogo-Pago Pago road project, which will include bike lanes, sidewalks and bus shelters for public convenience. Also set for advertisement in the near future is the Aoa road project located at the east end of Olomoana Elementary School. Among projects that are in the design phase are the Nu'uuli-Airport Intersection road project, Airport Intersection-Airport road project, a new Election Office Building and a new structure to house female detainees within the Tafuna Correctional Facility compound.

In accordance with our plan to revitalize the downtown area and improve our arts venue locations in the Territory, the renovation of the Lee Auditorium is underway and is slated for completion by year's end.

Worthy Mentionables

- *Hawaiian Air*

The issue of airfares and treatment of the Samoan people remain on the minds of your leaders. This administration remains committed to a just and reasonable solution to the ever-increasing burden that our families carry in order to travel off-island to the mainland. If you ask around, you will not be able to find a person who doesn't have an opinion on this issue one way or the other. In this new and ever-developing world, our world should be shrinking, bringing us closer together. However, in the area of travel abroad, it seems as though we are moving apart from the rest of the world. Nevertheless, you can be assured that we will not rest until an amicable solution that benefits all parties involved is reached. This is part and parcel of moving forward with the travel needs of the Territory.

- *Aircraft*

Over a year ago, ASG purchased the Sega'ula in order to supplement the travel needs of the people of Manu'a. As of July 2006, the Sega'ula flew over fifty-four flights to Manu'a. Fourteen of these flights were for medical needs of residents of the Manu'a islands. Twenty-four of those flights were flown while the commercial carrier Inter-Island was unable to serve the route. In essence, the people of Manu'a have benefited from the availability of this necessary aircraft. Aside from tending to the needs of the Manu'a people, the aircraft has also been invaluable in providing air travel for law enforcement, economic development, government agencies, FAA inspections and airport maintenance. Utilizing the Sega'ula, ASG has bridged the travel gap for the Manu'a islands, just in the lives saved alone. In the future, we will continue to move forward in bridging other service gaps that exist in the Manu'a islands.

- *Pacific Arts Festival*

American Samoa is renowned the world over for our hospitality, friendliness and warmth. As we prepare to host the 2008 Pacific Arts Festival, I ask all of us here today, especially our Fono members for their support as this administration plans this premier event. This festival can be an instrument for improving regional relations and perpetuating the sharing of our Pacific cultural heritage.

Moving Forward

Please be assured that this administration will continue to work with its hearts and its hands at transcending all barriers, which hinder our moving forward. We have so much to look forward to in this new year, and we have so much to accomplish. We invite the assistance of this Legislature, the Court and the public at large to unite and together we can move our island home forward.

ASG RADIO PROGRAM

With:

Governor Togiola Tulafono

Saturdays @ 7a.m.

On: Showers of Blessings - FM 104.7

Call 699-8123 or 699-8124

SHARE IMPORTANT ACTIVITIES

with our ASG workforce as well as the citizens of American Samoa. Email your articles, announcements, pictures or other information to: tapuitea@amsamoa.gov.as

Or Contact:

Harry Stevens @733-1694 or Vince Iuli @ 733-1041